

Japan and Indonesia—Connecting the Communities

HARRY SURJADI

“Indonesia Officially Excludes Japan from Bullet Train Project.” This was the title of news in the *Jakarta Post* on September 30, 2015.¹ And the title the *Asahi Shimbun* had on the same day, September 30, 2015, was “Japan Loses Indonesian High-speed Rail Link to China.”² The Indonesia’s fast train project case has shown that Indonesia is an important market for Japan, and China is Japan’s competitor. But I will not analyze or discuss why Indonesia preferred China to Japan.

According to the Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board, foreign direct investment in Indonesia increased by 18.1% (year-on-year) in the third quarter of 2015 with US\$ 21,337.21 million in 11,594 projects. Singapore, Japan, and Netherlands were the top three countries with the largest investment.³ Japan has invested US\$917.27 million in 399 projects.⁴ Furthermore, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)’s annual survey on the current trends and future outlook of overseas business operations by Japanese companies shows that Indonesia is the first place as for Japan’s foreign direct investment in 2013 and the second place in 2014. China is third place in 2013 and fourth place in 2014.

Therefore, I could say, Indonesia is expecting more foreign direct investment from Japan in the future. Compared to China, Indonesia is more preferable for Japanese companies to invest in because of several reasons. Just as Japan and China, Japan and Indonesia were in conflict during World War II when Japan occupied Indonesia for 3.5 years. However, Indonesia has forgiven Japan.

Indonesia is a big market with 255.7 million people in 2015 and 321.377 million people in 2050.⁵ The data from Standard Chartered showed Indonesia’s middle class (earning in the range of US\$2–US\$20 a day) numbered 149 million in early 2015, and will be around 171 million in 2020.⁶

¹ “Indonesia Officially Excludes Japan from Bullet Train Project,” *Jakarta Post*, September 30, 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/09/30/indonesia-officially-excludes-japan-bullet-train-project.html>.

² Masanobu Furuya, “Japan Loses Indonesian High-speed Rail Link to China,” *Asahi Shimbun*, September 30, 2015, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201509300057.

³ Trading Economics, “Indonesia Foreign Direct Investment,” <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/indonesia/foreign-direct-investment/>, and Investment Coordinating Board, http://www4.bkpm.go.id/file_uploaded/public/PERKEMBANGAN%20REALISASI%20INVESTASI%20PMA%20BERDASARKAN%20NEGARA%20Q3%202015.xls.

⁴ http://www7.bkpm.go.id/file_uploaded/public/Bahan%20Paparan%20-%20ENG%20-%20TW%20III%202015.pdf.

⁵ Population Pyramids of the World from 1950 to 2100, “Indonesia 2015,” <http://populationpyramid.net/indonesia/2015/> (accessed October 2015).

⁶ “Wealth Management Products the Right Fit for Emerging Middle Class,” *Jakarta Post*, March 27, 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/03/27/wealth-management-products-right-fit-emerging-middle-class.html>.

According to a survey of Indonesian consumers by Deloitte Consulting Southeast Asia for households making 5 million rupiah (about US\$416) per month, slightly more than 20% of income is devoted to luxury items related to leisure activities. The figure jumps to 26% for households making 7.5 million to 10 million rupiah (about US\$ 625 to 833).⁷ Nielsen Global Survey of Consumer Confidence and Spending Intentions index for Indonesia in 2013 was 123 points, with Philippines 121 points and India 118 points,⁸ while the Central Statistics Agency data shows that 27.7 million people are under the poverty line in September 2013.⁹

The question is “Is foreign direct investment good for Indonesia?” Definitely it is good for the government in terms of macro economy performance and to create jobs. It is also good only for a small number of Indonesians while it does not help many who live in villages. And in most cases, the projects will create a big impact on the social and the environment.

Among six top sectors of foreign direct investment are 285 mining projects and 142 food crops and plantation projects.¹⁰ Those two sectors are exploiting natural resources and will create a great impact on the communities in villages and the environment. In July 2015, Sumatera and Kalimantan Islands were covered by haze from forest and land burning. Since then, 10 people died because of the forest fire and haze.¹¹ And now, as of October 2015, hundreds of thousands of people are suffering from respiratory illnesses because of the smoke. Who are they? They are villagers, local people, and indigenous people who depend on the forests. Wild animals that could not run from fire will be burned or dying very slowly because of respiratory illnesses.

Police have arrested 127 suspects who started the fire and 10 companies—among them were foreign companies—allegedly started the fire in their peat land concession areas.¹² Most of the areas burned were prepared for oil palm plantations. Companies used fire for land clearing because it is cheap. But it is difficult to extinguish the fire in peat land. Japan, to a certain extent, contributes to the forest fire in Indonesia. In 2010, Japan imported 570,000 metric tons of palm oil, in 2011, 580,000 metric tons, in 2012, 595,000 metric tons, in 2013, 598,000 metric tons, and in 2014, 618,000 metric tons. It is increasing every year.¹³

⁷ “Indonesians Splurge When Monthly Income Passes \$375,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, July 15, 2015, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Consumers/Indonesians-splurge-when-monthly-income-passes-375>.

⁸ “Indonesian middle class most optimistic in the world: Nielsen,” *Jakarta Post*, July 24, 2013, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/07/24/indonesian-middle-class-most-optimistic-world-nielsen.html>.

⁹ “The Overview of Poverty in Indonesia on September 2014,” (January 2, 2015), http://www.bps.go.id/website/brs_eng/brsEng-20150130161955.pdf.

¹⁰ http://www7.bkpm.go.id/file_uploaded/public/Bahan%20Papan%20-%20ENG%20-%20TW%20III%202015.pdf.

¹¹ “Darurat Kesehatan : Asap Akibat Kebakaran Hutan dan Lahan Gambut Mulai Timbulkan Korban Jiwa,” *eMaritim*, October 2015, <http://www.emaritim.com/2015/10/darurat-kesehatan-asap-akibat-kebakaran.html>.

¹² “Sebanyak 127 Orang dan 10 Perusahaan Jadi Tersangka Kebakaran Hutan,” *Nasional*, September 16, 2015, <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/09/16/00320091/Sebanyak.127.Orang.dan.10.Perusahaan.Jadi.Tersangka.Kebakaran.Hutan>.

¹³ Index Mundi, “Japan Palm Oil Imports by Year,” <http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=jp&commodity=palm-oil&graph=imports>.

The forest fire is only one example of how investments have impact on the environment and the lives of Indonesians, especially the poor and the indigenous people who live near the forests. In 2014, about 28 million people are in absolute poverty—based on the poverty line at US\$ 25 monthly per capita income defined by the Indonesian government. If we apply the poverty threshold as is used by the World Bank—less than US\$ 1.25 a day as poor—the number will rise.¹⁴

In 2011, partner with Ruai TV—a local television station in Pontianak, West Kalimantan, I helped empowering communities in West Kalimantan. I created a communication model and opened a communication channel named RuaiSMS. The idea was that through opening access to media, it would help the community resolve their problems and hold oil palm plantation companies accountable.¹⁵ And after about a year, an indigenous peoples community was able to resolve its conflict with an oil palm plantation.

What is the lesson learned from my program in West Kalimantan? There are two important underlying factors to explain the lesson learned. **First**, in many countries, including Indonesia and other countries in Asia, mass media is not a public sphere any more.

According to Jurgen Habermas,¹⁶ a German sociologist and philosopher, public sphere is an imagined space of communicatively mediated social life or a discursively constructed social space between the state and civil society. Public sphere represents the infrastructure for social integration through public discourse. No specific social norms and regulatory rules limit citizens' access to the public sphere and no specific knowledge and competences are needed for them to participate in it.

The public sphere could be the sphere of public-ness, such as communication spaces created and maintained by the media, which involve relations of power and dominance. It could be the sphere of the public or publics consisting of free and equal citizens participating in public reasoning.¹⁷ Media is supposedly a public sphere, which can be accessed by citizens. In the reality, however, media as business entity is not a real public sphere as defined by Habermas.¹⁸

In Indonesia, while the mass media have their own agenda and some are very close to parliament members, media is not a public sphere anymore. Most of Japanese believe in the

¹⁴ “OECD Economics Surveys Indonesia,” (March 2015), <http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Overview-Indonesia-2015.pdf>.

¹⁵ International Center for Journalists, “New Mobile SMS Service Helps Indonesian Villagers Hold Company Accountable,” (December 1, 2011), <http://www.icfj.org/news/new-mobile-sms-service-helps-indonesian-villagers-hold-company-accountable>.

¹⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991).

¹⁷ Slavko Splichal, “Public Sphere and the Media,” in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd edition, vol. 19, (Elsevier Ltd., 2015),

¹⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.

mass media such as newspapers and television. When media cannot be functioned as a public sphere, how we can create a new public sphere?

Second, the community concept is becoming relevant again, especially in the era of social media with different forms and purposes. What is community? The word “community” is used in many ways— in community service, Christian community, gay community, etc. The simple definition of community is a group of people who have lived in the same way for a long time and do not like newcomers changing it. Examples include indigenous peoples communities and religious communities.

Community can also mean a gathering of a small group of people having something in common or lifestyle, family, class, such as a “movie star fan club.” A community is where everybody knows each other; all pull together in times of crisis. Or, a community is a group of people who come together sharing or having something in common. Or, a community is a place where everyone feels safe. “Each community is unique [and special], with values, beliefs, and religious practices that are rooted in tradition and continue to evolve and exist because they meet the community’s needs.”¹⁹ No other community is quite like to each other.

Are community people? There are clear distinction between community and the people. As defined above, a community is a collectivity or a group of people and people are an unbounded group of individuals sharing few things in common rather than a universal social nature and political character or nationality.

McKenzie explains the human communities as an ecological product, which is the outcome of competitive and accommodative process that gives spatial and temporal distribution to human aggregations and cultural achievements.²⁰ Communities are in constant competition with one another, and any advantage in location, resources, or market organization is forthwith reflected in differential growth. The core of community is its people—their history, characteristics, values, and beliefs. For McKenzie, “the human community differs from the plant community in the two dominant characteristics of mobility and purposes, that is, in the power to select a habitat and in the ability to control and modify the condition of the habitat.”²¹ McKenzie’s works are useful in understanding modern society.²²

The concept of community is important and used in economic analyses and marketing (Otsuka and Kalirajan 2010; Jonathan 1990; Hunter and Tietzen 1997; Jaffe 2007; Kolb 2008), health issues (Anderson and McFarlane 2011; Laverack 2006; Cook, Halsall and Wankhade 2015), developmental and political issues (Kaufman and Alfonso 2007; Grabosky

¹⁹ Elizabeth T. Anderson and Judith McFarlane, *Community As Partner: Theory and Practice in Nursing*, 6th Edition, (Philadelphia: Walters Kluwer and Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2011).

²⁰ Roderick D. McKenzie, “The Ecological Approach to the Study of the Human Community,” *American Journal of Sociology* (30) 3 (1924): 287-301.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Dennis W. MacDonald, “Beyond the Group: The Implications of Roderick D. McKenzie’s Human Ecology for Reconceptualizing Society and the Social,” *Nature and Culture* (6) 3 (Winter 2011): 263-284.

2009), and environmental issues (Gordon 2009). Community is actually a fundamental part of our life on the planet. We are longing for community. It is part of our human nature. We are born into community. We define ourselves by our communities: family, work, clubs, schools, churches, and mosques.

Modern life has, however, moved us in the opposite direction, toward individualism and a sense of self as discovered in separateness, away from community and connectedness. We can clearly see the lives in big cities such as Tokyo or Jakarta or Bangkok or Beijing and other modern big cities but not in villages or remote areas. According to the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, there are around 50 million people classified as indigenous. They live in communities, thousands of communities throughout Indonesia. The communities have done many initiatives without involving the governments.

During the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP), we met Arai Norihito and Hamaguchi Mariko from a civil society organization named Peace Seeds. With farmers in Chiba Prefecture, they are conserving indigenous seeds. We met another community, Share Okusawa. Horiuchi Masahiro is providing part of his old house to community members for having discussion, cooking together, screening movie, music performance, etc.

In Kamikatsu Town, we had the opportunity to learn about the Zero Waste Project, which the residents are involved in and support by recycling papers, plastics, and composting organic waste. The Project is also supported by the local government. Another initiative is from a citizen group in Minamisoma City, Fukushima Prefecture, who edited and published a booklet entitled “Doctor Masaharu Tsubokura’s Easy-to-Understand Lecture on Radiation, from Minamisoma Fukushima” in August 2014.²³

The lessons learned from my program in West Kalimantan are:

1. Community is important and we need to identify or form communities to help villagers resolving their problems.
2. The communities need to share important information or problem that they are facing with the outside world and they need to get important information for their community members from the outside world.
3. To empower them, they need to connect to media as a public sphere or create a new public sphere.
4. As community they will have bigger opportunities in resolving their problems.
5. People in each country could not depend on the government all the time for resolving their problems, even when government policies, especially economic policies, create

²³ Japan for Sustainability, “Citizen Group in Disaster Area Publishes Booklet to Provide Basic Information on Radiation,” (October 24, 2015), http://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id035380.html.

more problems for the people. Foreign direct investment from developed countries to Indonesia creates more environmental and social problems such as forest fire.

My proposals for next activities are:

1. Identify communities in every country in Asia and then transfer the real communities to the cyber space. In virtual world of Internet, we can easily form communities, which are difficult to form in real world because of distance.
2. Create a new public sphere in each country using Internet technology as tools and medium to share information among communities or community members and open the public sphere for the communities.
3. Create a regional public sphere as the place to share common threat or common concerns or common problems or share resources among communities in Asia.
4. Since Asian has many languages, there should be volunteers helping translating the information from one language to other languages through crowd sourcing.

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